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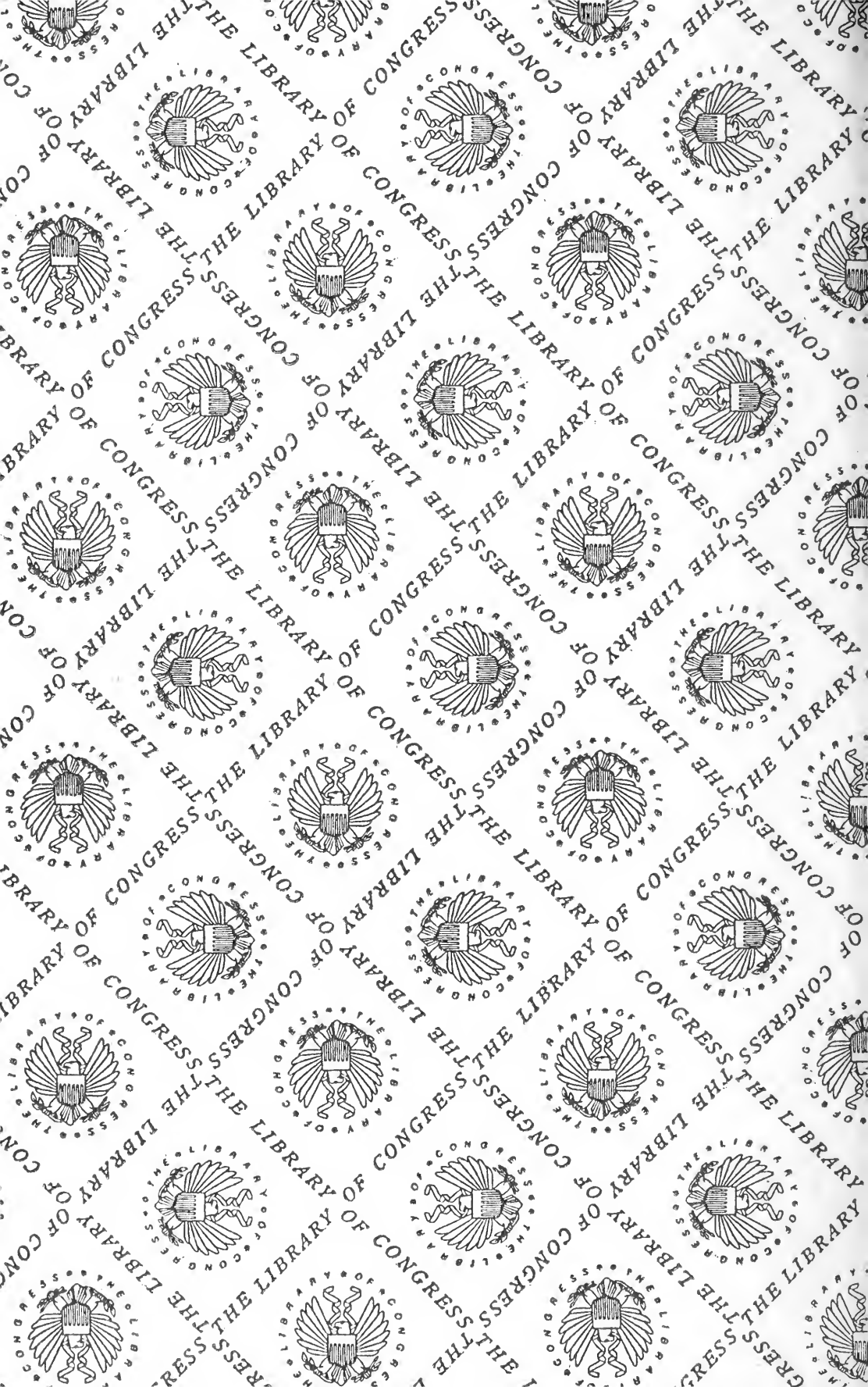
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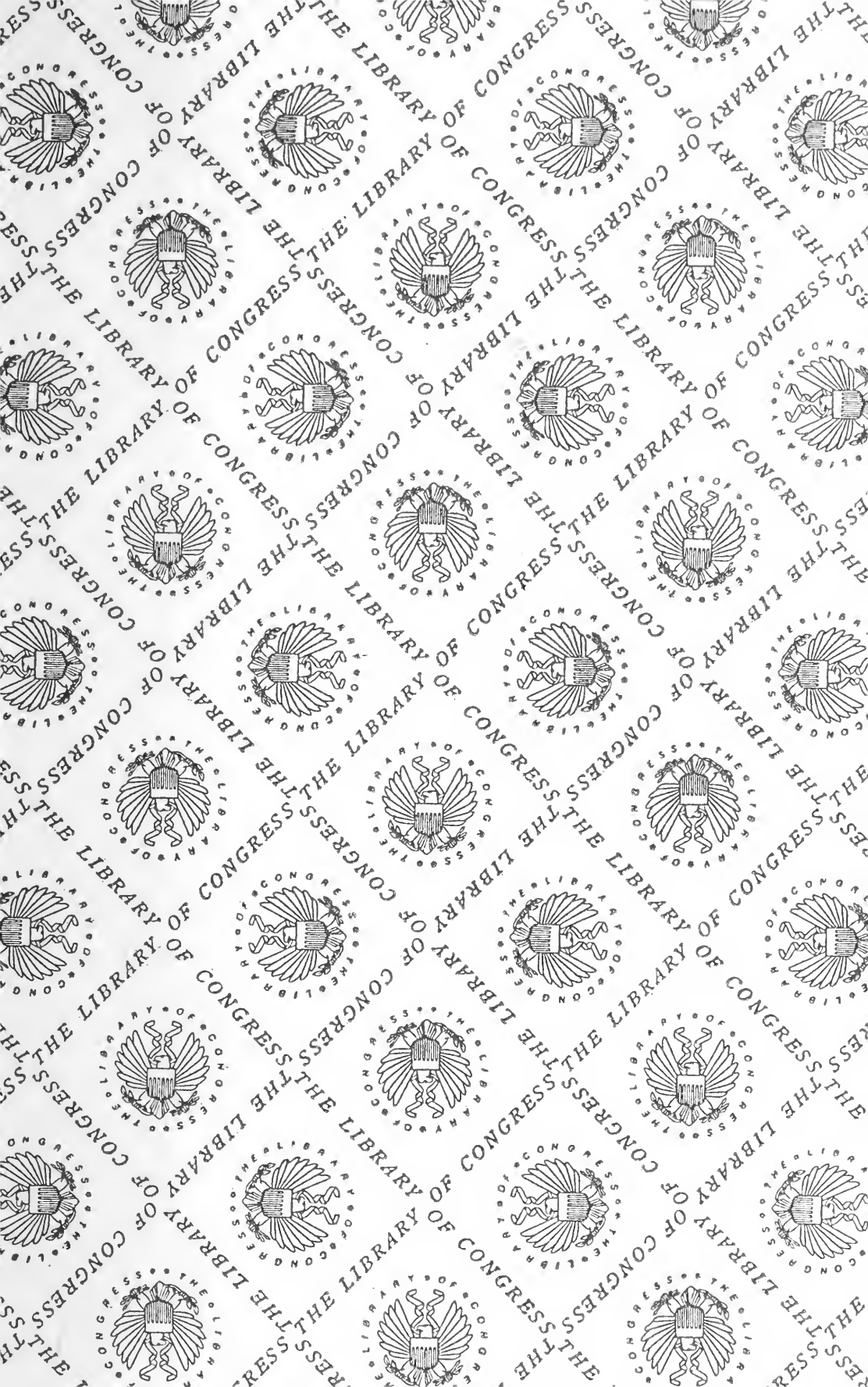
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SONNETS
FROM THE
PATAGONIAN

SONNETS FROM THE PATAGONIAN

THE STREET OF LITTLE HOTELS

BY

DONALD EVANS

Author of "Discords"

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LOVE IN PATAGONIA

To
Carl Van Vechten

LOVE IN PATAGONIA

FORGETTING her mauve vows the Fania fled,
Taking away her moonlight scarves with her—
There was no joy left in the calendar,
And life was just an orchid that was dead.
Even our pious peacocks went unfed—
I had deserved no treachery like this,
For I had bitten sharp kiss after kiss
Devoutly, till her sleek young body bled.

Then Carlo came ; he shone like a new sin—
Straightway I knew pearl-powder still was sweet,
And that my bleeding heart would not be scarred.
I sought a shop where shoes were sold within,
And for two hundred francs made brave my feet,
And then I danced along the boulevard!



PORTRAITS OF ALLEN NORTON

To

Mabel Dodge

IN THE VICES

GAY and audacious crime glints in his eyes,
And his mad talk, raping the commonplace,
Gleefully runs a devil-praising race,
And none can ever follow where he flies.
He streaks himself with vices tenderly;
He cradles sin, and with a figleaf fan
Taps his green cat, watching the round suns span
The wasted minutes to eternity.

Once I took up his trail along the dark,
Wishful to track him to the witches' flame,
To see the bubbling of the sneer and snare.
The way led through a fragrant starlit park,
And soon upon a harlot's house I came—
Within I found him playing at solitaire!



EN MONOCLE

BORN with a monocle he stares at life,
And sends his soul on pensive promenades;
He pays a high price for discarded gods,
And then regilds them to renew their strife.
His calm moustache points to the ironies,
And a fawn-coloured laugh sucks in the night,
Full of the riant mists that turn to white
In brief lost battles with banalities.

Masters are makeshifts and a path to tread
For blue pumps that are ardent for the air;
Features are fixtures when the face is fled,
And we are left the husks of tarnished hair;
But he is one who lusts uncomforted
To kiss the naked phrase quite unaware.

THE IMMORTAL POSE

DIM-EYED with gazing at dark veils is he,
His drooping lackeys tangled in their lace;
But he is groping for the final grace,
Undaunted in a deep despondency—
A night of flame at last unleashed will be,
Beholding then the deathless dazzling face,
His hands will in that awful moment's space
From out the finite grasp infinity.

To reach those heights what will he have to pay?
Immortal poise bought with unceasing pain,
The perfect pose that no man dare forget,
A teasing mask that none can tear away—
What matters it if he himself be slain?
— A star will rise, grow big, and never set.



PORTRAIT OF THE FAN FAN

Imitated from "Discords"

To

Louise Norton

LOVING KINDNESS

Moscow

HER flesh was lyrical and sweet to flog,
For the whip blanched her blood, though every vein
Flooded with hate shot a hot flow of pain,
And her screams were muffled by a brackish fog.
He loved her, yet his passion could but fret
Unless he lashed her to an awkward rage—
But when his hand wrote terror on her page
He knew exultant joy of feigned regret.

Theirs was a bond that poured the wine of fear,
And he drained her stiffened limbs with cruel art.
He taught her that all tenderness had fled
Till she would beg the hurt to taste the tear,
And when she bent to kiss her crumpled heart
It lit a Chinese candle in his head.

PORTRAIT OF MME. HYSSAIN

To

Claire Burke

THEATRE DU NORD

Tashkend

SHE was tired to tears, and yet there were no tears,
Only the dead seas of indifference
Meeting the languors of a nerveless sense,
For she had played the roles for twenty years.
The queen called for her satins, while the drab
Demanded love, and the wild hunger tore;
The woman raged to touch the flame once more,
But the worn-out emotions could not stab.

There were the thousand parts she had essayed,
And the three thousand gowns that she had worn.
Into the ragbag each frock found its flight,
Crumpled and ravished of a film-proud shade;
And every script is wandering forlorn,
Gnawed by the mirage of an opening night.



PORTRAIT OF MICHAEL PETER

To

J. B. Crandall

THE YEAR'S END

THERE is what is and what there is is fair,
But most is yet to come to what is here;
Here is the most to come from out a year,
For from the year there comes all there is there.
Song for the minnow and a crystal pool,
And all is said of all there was to say,
Yet all must say the all, since every day
A nuptial kiss the wise man gives a fool.

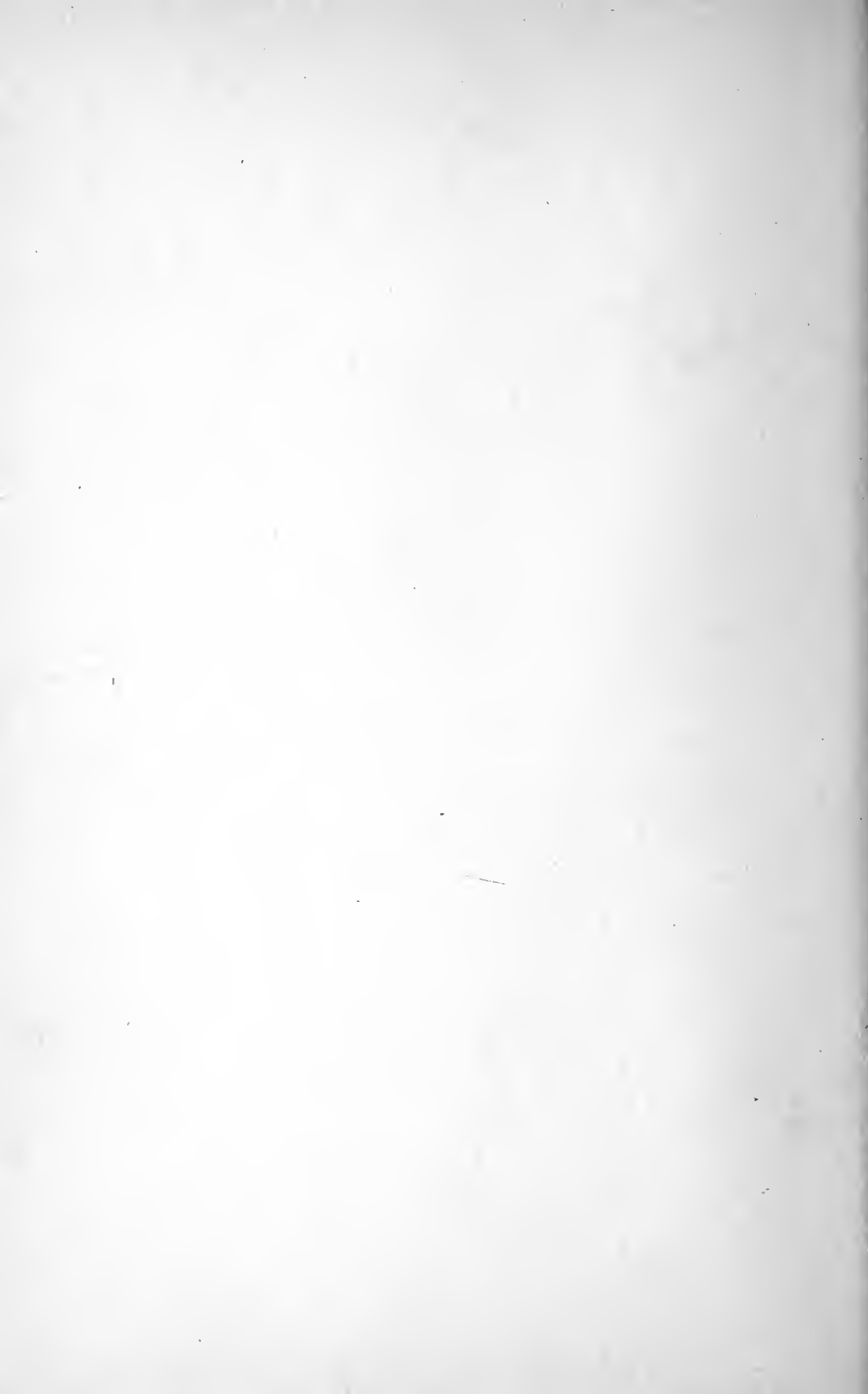
An ear of corn from the blind red sunburnt earth
Blandly lies in the sun divinely green,
Disowning what the earth and sun have done.
Kisses and corn and a pool to crown the birth,
With once to come what never before has been,
And here is there what there is here begun.



PORTRAIT OF DONOVAN BLADES

To

Fania Marinoff



BEHIND CLAIRE BURKE AT DINNER

Saint-Valery-sur-Somme

HIS lips must ever be but cold and mute,
Chilled are they with his being still a boy's;
Not choosing he has made the lifelong choice—
To play in silence on a silver lute.
Robbed even of that blossom-blighted fruit,
The sad remembrance of forgotten joys,
In one sound only finds his heart a voice,
In the low moaning of a lonely flute.

O aching arms flung out to her in vain!
O beaker brimmed with bliss he may not share!
Yet see him kneeling tremblingly confess—
O joy renounced for wretched pale-eyed pain—
As of white angels hushed in holy prayer,
The calm sweet grandeur of her girlishness!

PORTRAITS OF MABEL DODGE

To

Louis Sherwin

HER SMILE

Laggan

HER hidden smile was full of little breasts,
And with her too white hands she stroked her fears,
The while the serpent peered at her pink ears,
And night's grim hours stalked in, unbidden guests.
A noise was in her eyes that sang of scorn,
And round her voice there gleamed a nameless dread,
As though her lips were hungry for the dead,
Yet knew the food of dawn would be forlorn.

The cold hours ebbed, and still she held her throne;
Across the sky the lightning made mad play,
And then the scarlet screams stood forth revealed.
She turned her back, and grasped a monotone;
It answered all; she lived again that day
She triumphed in the tragic turnip field.

THE LAST DANCE AT DAWN

Firenze

AND she was sad since she could not be sad,
And every star flared amorous in the sky.
Her pampered knees fell under her keen eye
And it came to her she would not go mad.
The gaucheries were turning the last screw,
But there was still the island in the sea,
The harridan chorus of eternity,
That let her smile because he saw she knew.

She even dared be impudent again,
And bit his ear; the deaths were far away.
The Bibles orgied in the treasure vaults—
She tried to rouge her heart, yet quite in vain.
The crucifix danced in, beribboned, gay,
And lisped to her a wish for the next waltz.

PORTRAIT OF CARL VAN VECHTEN

To
Gertrude Stein



IN THE GENTLEMANLY INTEREST

Piccadilly

HE polished snubs till they were regnant art,
Curling their shameless toilets round the hour.
Each lay upon his lips an exquisite flower
Subtly malign and poisoned for its part.
The path of victims was no wanton plan—
He had bowed his head in sorrow at his birth,
For he had said long ere he came to earth
That it was no place for a gentleman.

But always a heart-scald lurked behind the screen,
And somehow he missed the ultimate degrees.
He saw a beggar at the daylight's fall
And then he rose and robbed him for the scene;
And when they called him cad he found release—
He knew he had used the finest snub of all.

PORTRAITS OF THE AUTHOR

To

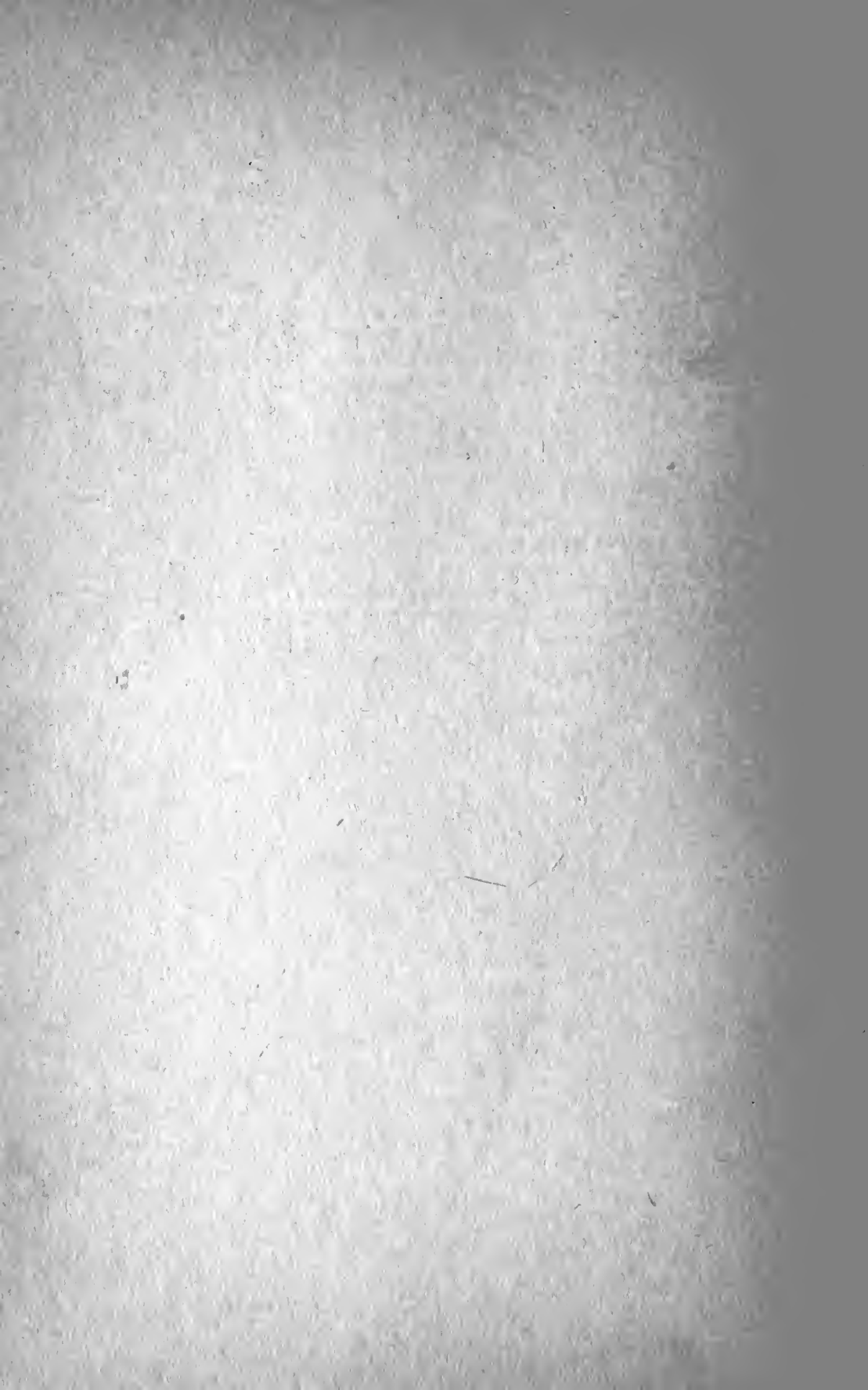
Allen Norton



EPICEDE

WISTFULLY shimmering, shamelessly wise and weak,
He lives in pawn, pledging a battered name;
He loves his failures as one might love fame,
And listens for the ghost years as they speak.
A fragrance bright and broken clasps his head,
And wildwood airs sing a frayed interlude,
While cloaked he comes in a new attitude
To play gravedigger if the word be said.

He swore he would be glad and only glad,
And turned to Broadway for the peace of God.
He found it at the bottom of the glass,
For where the dregs lay it was less than sad,
And mid the murmur when the dance was trod
He heard the echo of a genius pass.



IN THE FALKLANDS

FOR his soul when homeless then is at home,
And in a paradise where shadows wane
He draws droll figures on the windowpane
To lure his vagrom fellow souls to Rome.
There is a potent rancour in the moon,
Hunting for those who love him still, and three
Gleam back. But with detached anxiety
He vows that he will alienate them soon.

He said that love had but two words, the last
And first, and joy in flying laces lay.
He watched each kiss to kill it at stark ease—
His strangler's hands carve prayers for the past—
And chastely he spends an hour every day
Erecting tombstones to carnalities.

THE NOON OF NIGHT

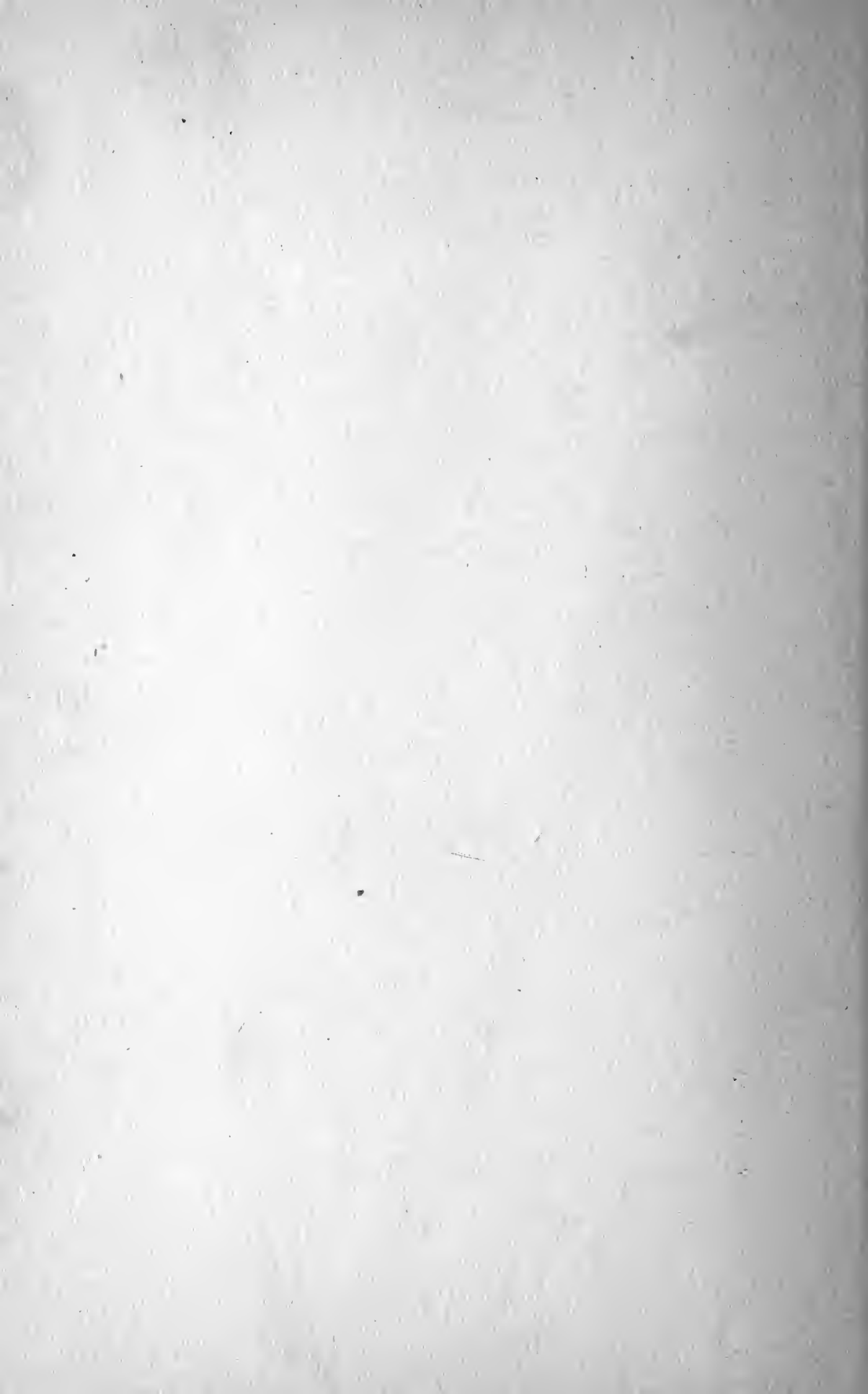
THE fictive tear he holds in reverence,
And studies heady griefs that wash the cheek;
It is a dim dominion he must seek.
To gain some raiment for his impotence.
Sorrows are numbered, the sighs have their strings,
And barren smiles are trained for tragedy;
He ties up parcels of mock gaiety,
And labels them with many worshippings.

Grapes in the grass, and every day a waste
At scattered sources of lost loveliness,
With drunkenness to drain the ruined seats.
Thus came the gems to perjure glassy paste—
But he thanks God aloof from all distress,
For he knows sewers run beneath the city streets.

FIFTH AVENUE

AND when discovery marred the best disguise
He winced a sigh, bowed to a spoiled deceit,
And donned the damask draperies of defeat
To woo dishonour as an enterprise.
His self-betrayal had its tenderness
And reared an outland refuge for his pride,
For all were baffled telling how he lied,
Since more than they could guess he would confess.

He died a hero in Fifth Avenue
One yellowed day saving a tattered man.
But in the litter of his passing breath
A prayer lay lest one should misconstrue.
It was an accident—and he began
A last profound apology to death.



PORTRAITS OF LOUISE NORTON

To

Donald Evans

BUVEUSE D'ABSINTHE

Rue d'Aphrodite

HER voice was fleet-limbed and immaculate,
And like peach blossoms blown across the wind
Her white words made the hour seem cool and kind,
Hung with soft dawns that danced a shadow fete.
A silken silence crept up from the South,
The flutes were hushed that mimed the orange moon,
And down the willow stream my sighs were strewn,
While I knelt to the corners of her mouth.

Lead me afar from clamorous dissonance,
For I am sick of empty trumpeting,
And all the streets are sad with dusty noise,
Here I have found her sweet sheer utterance,
And now I seek the garden of the wings
Where I may bathe in sounds that life destroys.



EXTREME UNCTION

A CROSS the rotting pads in the lily lake
Her gesture floated toward the iris bed,
Wrapped in a whispered perfume of the dead,
And her gaze followed slowly in its wake.
Now was the summons come she must obey,
For Beauty pleaded from the charnel house,
For violet nights and violent carouse
To free her from the cerements of decay.

Crapulous hands reach out to strangle thee,
And every moment is a winding-sheet,
With bats to chant corruption's litany.
Be thou a torch to flash fanfaronade,
And as the earth crumbles beneath thy feet
Flaunt thou the glitter of a new brocade!



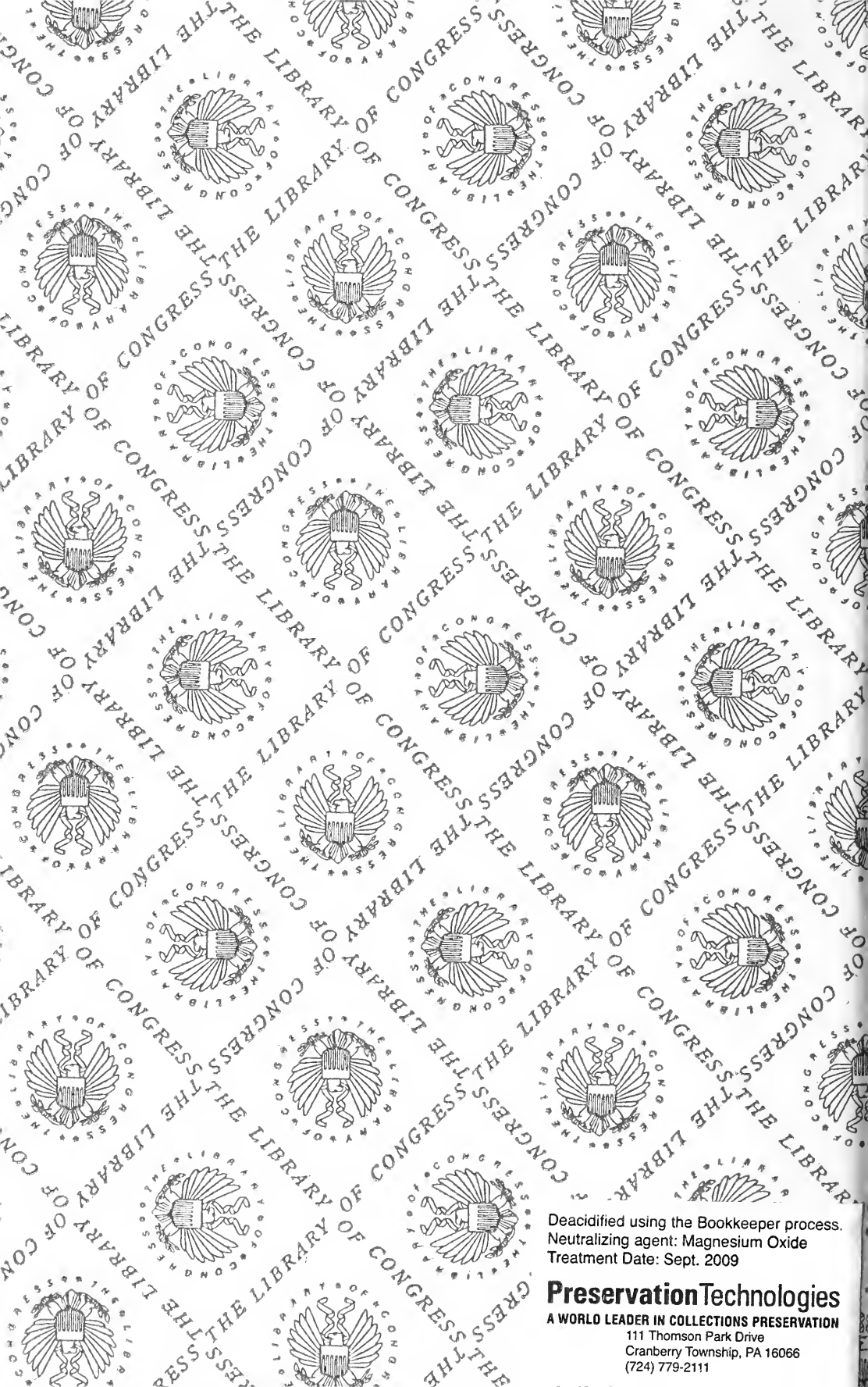
THE JADE VASE

Pittsburgh

HE had hunted for it to the alley's end,
Yet when he found the jade vase he was sad,
Eaten with ennui for the praise he had
Given where offerings merely did not offend.
A wall of glass held back his worshipping
And his eyes that drank this miracle of stone
Knew the discovery was not his own—
Still the vase was there, and that was everything.

He thought back over all the songs he had sung,
And all the hours his heart like waving grain
Had swayed to music. And the joys now dead
Seemed haunting coins to meagre beauty flung.
Poignantly he longed to call them back. In vain!
But they were the last words that the poet said.

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